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"WATERLOO" AND OTHER POEMS

BY

MARTIN WILCOXSON.

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WATERLOO.

To my Godfather, the Comte de Grouchy.

In sodden gloom upon the verdant fields that swell
In fertile valley, hill and plain, in Belgium's realm,
The rival armies wrapped in slumber deep—
A slumber to be followed by eternal sleep
To many a soldier resting on his arms,
Who waits but for the bugle call's alarm
To rouse to action, and to deadly fight,
From calm inaction of the boding night.

The sun glints forth on a majestic sight—
Myriads of bristling bayonets, swords that light
With coruscations like the lightning's gleam,
Amongst the shades of night that pass,
Revealing sweeps of verdant green
Midst fields of flowing wheat, and grass;
Lance, plume, and helmet, steel cuirass,
Like glittering, massive serpent pass;
Fold upon fold, the steel-clad cavalry of France
Flanked to the right and left in threatening mass,
The veteran soldiers of the Imperial Guard,
By rows of cannon, far as the eye can grasp.

Now from their massive ranks rings out the alarm,
The bugles' revielle, the call to arms!
Deep melody sounds forth from the Imperial bands,
Salutes the Emperor, rolls along the strands
Of soldiers; as a roaring whirlwind o'er the sands
Thunders the Marsiellaise! Rousing the arms of France!

And facing them in ranks unbroken, silence deep,
The silence of a lion roused from sleep,
Who waits alert in readiness to leap,
The massive ranks of Britain's soldiers stand ;
O'er tartan plaid and scarlet coat expands
The banner of St. George ; its crimson shield
Has waved o'er many a bloody field,
But e'er the coming day has passed,
Of all, the bloodiest field the last.

The final combat of the undying war
Which France and England wage,
And which forevermore
Shall crown Napoleon with the crown
Of Charlemagne the Great,
Or raise to imperial power Britain's state—
Sink in irrevocable ruin
The arms of France,
Or wreck forever
Britain's boasted dominance.

Now flames the artillery on the distant height,
Whilst from its murky clouds, and flash of light
Tears forth the hurtling scream of shrapnel, ball and shell ;
Strikes in the British ranks like fire from hell.

In mangled carnage, shriek, and groan,
The ranks of Britain seethe and foam,
As seethes and foams the raging sea,
Break ranks, and form, form ranks, and flee
Beneath the deadly agony,
The dread artillery's play ;
And from the heights of Belle Alliance
Stream down the Imperial guards of France—
A whole battalion swept away
By British cannons' deadly play,
In one discharge alone—
Calm and undaunted hold their way,
Charge on the squares before them lay,

Platoons ring fire as they dash
In sheets of flame with bayonets' flash,
And soaked with blood the trodden sward,
As Britain meets the Imperial Guard,
Who ne'er defeat have known.

The British ranks hold ground to death,
In deadly combat, breath to breath
The Highlander and Grenadier,
In maddened fury, lost to fear,
With bayonets stab, and groan, and cheer,
The Emperor's eye beneath ;
From British lines the cannons roar,
On charging ranks their fires pour ;
The lines hold firm, the Guards recoil,
The Veteran Grenadiers are foiled :
Napoleon pales as death.

Down sweep the heavy armed dragoons,
Stream out their massy sable plumes,
Aloft gleam bare their sabres bright,
Hurled on the squares in ponderous flight,
Like rushing torrent from a height,
That bears a rock away—
The victors of an hundred fights,
To death devoted they.
And twenty times they form, and dash
Through cannons' flame and bayonets' flash,
Break on the squares in thunderous crash,
Led by the intrepid Ney ;
Who, on the field of Waterloo,
Since in the morn his sword he drew,
Covered with blood, his features grey,
Five horses shot he rode that day—
"The Bravest of the Brave!"

The British squares commence to shake,
Raked by artillery, crushed by horse ;

Napoleon sees their foremost break,
And counts the British lost.
Out to the front the Iron Duke
Rides forth to cheer his crushed troop;
Rides through the fire alone,
And, gazing on the mingled dead,
In agony he bows his head:
"Would God! that night, or Blucher come!"

The Grenadiers in column massed,
Once more their all united strength
Against the British center throw
And break its line at length;
The British cannon rakes their flank,
The solid column 's rent to shreds,
And strewn the ground with writhing forms,
The dying, and the dead.

Now, as a tempest that sweeps,
Lashing the bosom of the deep in furious might—
As a fire that leaps
In smoking flames of roaring light,
And leaves black devastation in its train—
So sweeps the combat o'er the smoking plain.
Maintained with valour from the break of day,
Endured, repulsed, then sinking, dies away,
Leaving the issue of the strife
Still undecided.
Eleven hours now the fight has lasted;
Shadows of the approaching night
Darken the field of Waterloo;
The fate of France looms boding as the clouds
That with the deepening shadows darker grow.

And victory hovers in the air,
As balance weighted to a hair
May tremble here and tremble there,
So hang the fortunes of the rival lines
Of France 'gainst Britain's might combined—

Nor England sole, had won the day.
The British troops exhausted lay,
Their utmost strength to stand at bay
And wait the Prussian drums.
Approaching with the shades of night,
Along the far horizon line,
Dark troops appear, their cannon shine—
Distant advance of friend or foe,
Amongst the ranks but few who know.
Were't Grouchy, victory's won!
Von Bulow, Blucher, veterans grey,
With sixty thousand men appear
On the French flank, and in their rear,
With many a vengeful memory they,
The Prussian armies come;
Revenge for Germany's defeats,
The seal Napoleon's doom.

The veteran, Marquis de Grouchy, son of an illustrious sire—
Amongst the Marshals of Napoleon, none in their rank stood higher—
Now brings on France, by absence, injury so deep,
Her greatest foe could do no more in ire—
In soldier-like obedience to his orders [Note A.]
Pursues towards Wavre
The defeated Prussians, upon Namurs Plains;
Reck's not the destinies of France are elsewhere fought,
And that the victories he dearly gains
To shield her destinies, avail her naught.
At Waterloo, where Grouchy should have been,
Rings out in place the Prussian cannon's din.

And now arrives the crowning moment of the day—
The final effort of Napoleon
To crush by one o'erwhelming, irresistible blow
The British troops upon his front,
Ere Wellington, joined by Blucher,

Overwhelm him.
Two vast converging columns on the field lance forth
To meet upon the center of the British line;
The "Old" and "Young" Guard in the attack unite,
Flanked by a massive horde of cavalry,
And high above the artillery's muffled roar
Thunder their sonorous cheers,
As, bidding them to conquer or to die,
Napoleon speaks his last words to his soldiers.
Ney leads the column, sabre in hand, on foot,
His horse shot under him.
A concentrated fire from the enemy's guns
Pours on the assault and melts their ranks away;
The veterans of Wagram and of Austerlitz
Undaunted hold their course,
Into the belching flames of the enemy's fire
Charge on and strike the British center;
And now ensues a hideous carnage, grim
Death holds high revel,
Melting the corps like snow in fire thrust.
Yet by their intrepid dash
And ponderous volume rushing on,
Had crushed the British center,
Were they supported;
But at the instant of this desperate attack,
To guard his flank from the advancing Prussian lines,
Napoleon must withdraw the reserved troops
To meet the attack of Bulow.
Before the onslaught of the desperate French,
Belgian brigade and Hanoverian flee or die;
The advancing Prussian lines are driven back;
The British center trembles 'neath the shock;
Reports of Wellington's defeat reach Brussels.
The Duke of Wellington ever at the front
Cheers on his men;
And foot and horse, the Life Guards—
Flower of the British line—
Charge on the quivering ranks of the assaulting foe

And crush them to the earth.
So ends the crowning effort of the Imperial Arms,
Which all but wins the day.

The allied troops commence the attack,
The French, outnumbered, falling back,
And darkly looms the approach of night
On the unequal, desperate fight;
The old Imperial Grenadiers
Refuse surrender, die with cheers
Of "Live the Emperor!"
With bayonets fixed they meet their fate,
Face to the foe, in deadly hate,
And Wellington's troops refrain from fire—
A moment's pause in battle's ire—
Demand: "Surrender the Guard!"

The valiant veterans, bronzed and scarred
By many a battle's blaze,
Fought on the desert's sandy sward,
Where flashed the fiery Mameluke sword;
'Neath the Egyptian haze;
Midst Russia's snows;
Where mistral blows
From o'er the Alpine glaze;
At "Austerlitz," where fell the Austrian power;
"Marengo," "Wagram," "Jena," "Friedland," "Eylau,"
Now meet defeat at last, in fatal hour,
On Waterloo's dread plain.
"The Old Guard dies!" Surrender, they refuse,
And charging, perish, midst overwhelming foes;
Undying lives their name!

The Young Guard holds its desperate post
Till rings the cry that "All is Lost!"
The remnant cavalry charge; in solid masses borne,
Massed in confusion mingle they,
Dragoon and Lancer, Cuirassier,
A desperate hope forlorn!

The " North Dragoons " ride down their flank,
And break through horse, on foot and rank;
Bright gleams the broadsword's deadly play
As bears down Scotland's cavalry—
The hopes of France are gone.

The Emperor, from the height of a commanding eminence,
Surveys the victory of his enemies with darkening brow;
Beholds, in ever greater multitudes approaching,
The lines and cannon of the Prussian foe;
The " Scots Greys ' " charge, the Grenadiers' repulse, the Cavalry's overthrow,
His overwhelmed troops retreating—
Irrevocably lost, the Field of Waterloo.

Now ends the battle, as in hopeless plight,
O'er broken troops, in frantic flight,
Thunders the Prussian cannon's roar;
In sweeping clouds their armies pour
Upon the flank; upon the front,
In mighty volume awful brunt,
The troops of Britain charge as one.
Napoleon stands at bay,
His staff encircling 'round their chief,
In black despair and maddened grief;
For France, a fatal day.

Napoleon spurs towards the front,
To seek death on the bloody plain
Where stood the remnant Grenadiers,
Midst heaps of mangled slain,
The last of all his armies great.
He draws his sword to share their fate;
A general, in the encircling staff,
Siezes the Emperor's rein;
"Sire! the foe has gained enough,
Thy life to give were vain."
To Fate's decree the greatest man must yield;

Napoleon wheels his charger, quits the field:
The Allied Arms have gained.

FINIS.

Verse 12, Line 7.

NOTE A.

"The Emperor desires me to inform you that at this moment he is about to attack the English Army, which has taken a position in front of the Forest of Soignes.

"*His Majesty desires that you should direct your movements upon Wavre*, (in order to approach us and conduct our operations in concert, driving before you all the Prussian corps who have taken that direction or who might stop,) where you should endeavor to arrive as soon as possible."

Soult to Grouchy, 18th of June, 1815, ten o'clock.
Grouchy, Page 21.

THE REFLECTION.

The star that glistens in the tranquil pool, like fire,
  Throws back its gleaming radiance to the vault of night;
The smoke that rises from the burning pyre,
  And mounts to air in sombre clouds of light;
The shadow that the mirror bright returns,
  A semblance of the substance in its light:
Should we attribute less of substance to the shade,
Than more of realty to the cause which made,
The shadow of the substance in its shade?
  All things are phantasies and passing dreams;
And grief and happiness are like the glow
The lustrous opals in the sunbeam throw,
  Which, with the play of light, alternate stream
  In softly changing gold and purple gleam.

TO A SOUTHERN BEAUTY.

A spirit lurks within thine eyes
That kindles fire in my soul ;
Would I could press thy crimson lips,
Thy beating heart against my own,
And in a deep, a fierce embrace,
Could merge my soul within thine own.

To tangle thy blonde tresses,
  To flood thy soul with love,
In long and sweet caresses
  To rise to heights above ;
Forget the heat of noonday,
  The weariness of life,
Its wiles, and cares, and sorrows,
  Its soltitude and strife.

Think not that I deceive thee,
  Nor feel fear nor dismay,
Though love be brief or lasting,
  And rest for many a day,
Or perish from its fire,
  Worn out in passionate play ;
Wouldst have the lightning lasting
  Like ray of noonday sun ?
Its joy in pain may vanish
  Its short-lived day when done.
Yet fond remembrance lingers,
  The fire burns the heart,
And deep becomes its sadness
  When those who've loved must part.

LOVE AND PLEASURE.

Oh! pleasure, passing pleasure,
And fickle, changeful love,
Burns as the glowing meteor
That speeds through space above;
Or dawning like the day star
That dies and fades away,
And leaves but its remembrance,
A prospect void and grey;
As darkness follows daylight,
As sunset follows day,
So life, and love, and pleasure
Are swift to pass away.

Then grasp the fleeting moments,
Whate'er of joy they hold,
Seek not to find in tinsel
The lasting gleam of gold;
For life doth not contain it,
Howe'er long it might last,
Both youth, and fire, and passion,
Will fade into the past.
Then grasp the fleeting moment,
Whate'er of joy it hold,
E'er time and fate in darkness
With mighty arms enfold.

Yet why should the heart falter,
Or why the mind despair?
Were life and love both endless
Pleasure could scarce be there.
Joy dwells but for an instant,
Like melody in air,
Like hovering bird o'er flower,
From whence we know not where.

THE FALSE DAWN.

With eyes dim with slumber
I gazed towards the West,
Where o'er the dark hilltops
There gleamed the false dawn,
That shines in the westward
With soft, purple glow,
And fades into darkness
With break of the morn.

And I woke from my slumber
And followed its gleam,
Till it faded and vanished
Like a mirage away;
And I looked to the eastward—
A bright crimson stream,
The true dawn's first glimmer,
Betokened the day.

And I turned to retrace
O'er the long, weary path,
The way I had followed,
And followed too long;
The course I had chosen
Led down to the deep,
And the path that I sought for
Was faded and gone.

And I gazed at the sunrise,
With myriad bright rays,
Where beauty and happiness
Lay towards the dawn;
And I gazed to the West
Where my false hopes had led,
And I sank on the hillside
Alone and forlorn.

"The False Dawn": Subhi Kazib, a transient light about an hour on the horizon before the Subhi Sadik, or true dawn. A phenomenon in the East.

THE SEA.

Steel blue, and quivering in their airy flight,
  Dash on the curving crescents of the waves;
Gleam as they roll with sapphire light,
  And flowing, flash like trenchant glaives;
And break, with a thund'rous crash, as beating swords
  That fall midst armour-clad contending hordes,
As in the din of battle's muffled roar;
  So wage tumultuous conflict, sea and shore.

With baffled hiss draw back from o'er the yellow sands,
And sinking in the hollow of the deep, expose the strands,
That lie eternal 'neath the brunt
Of ever-breaking seas upon their front;
The wild-fowls cry, the dolphins plunge, the curlews shriek,
O'er the fierce conflict of the embattled deep;
Bright gleams the sun upon the misty fray,
Till night in sable pinions folds the day;
The owl's weird call, the glistening star, the waning moon,
The sounds of sombre night, like distant loom
Of myriad insects in the dank sea grass,
That whir incessant as the hours pass.

Dim shapes that loom and fade as ends the night,
The salty fragrance of the sea, as grows the light;
Till dawn, upon the far horizon line, crimsons the skies,
The glittering star amidst the glamour dies;
And floating high aloft, the fleecy cloud
The eagle, herald of the morn, enshrouds;
Whilst far beneath the lofty heavens' panoply
Rolls on the ceaseless conflict of the sea.

SPORTSMAN'S SONG.

Sing Hey! for the merry greensward,
  Sing Ho! for the baying hound,
The thunder of heavy hoofbeats,
  The hunter's gallop and bound;
Sing Hey! for the merry wildwood,
  The cry of the beaters far,
The flash of the double-barrel,
  The thud of the bird from air.

In the frosty air of the morning
  The call of the pheasant rings,
Beneath the clustering holly
  The whistling woodcock springs;
The fox from the covert stealing,
  The clamour of fox-hounds' bay,
Like a charge of cavalry thundering—
  Yoicks! Tally-Ho! Gone away!

AN ITALIAN LEGEND.

High on a massive rock,
Midst cypress branch and clustering myrtle hid,
Lie prone, concealed, the outposts of the banditti's guard.
Brigand and outlaw, scourge of the Calabrian hills,
High midst their mountain fastnesses
He holds full sway,
And woe betide the traveller fortune lures
To stray within his grasp.
Short shrift, the merciless banditti's steel
Where it cannot find gold may yet find blood.

His guards, a line of sentinels, stretch
O'er frowning buttress of the mountain craigs,
Thence to the smiling valley at their feet
Where winds the long white roadway,
Hot with white dust
In the deep glare of noonday sun,
Now crossed by lengthy shadows
Of the early dawn;
The lark's shrill carol as he soars in air,
And the soft breeze of the Calabrian hills
Sweeps fragrant o'er the flowery fields,
Wet with the morning dew.
High from the lofty cliff
The brigand sentinel scans,
Glances like soaring falcon circling o'er the fields
'Ere from his azure height he swoops
On the defenceless.

Midst the hush of the hills in the dim, early morning,
'Ere the blush of the dawn or the sunbeam's first ray
Of the swift breaking day gives its earliest warning,
Where murmurs the pine o'er the waterfall's play,
And the wind whispers soft to the far distant valley

Where mist wreath and cloud half conceal and disclose
The husbandman's hut like an ivy-crowned chalet,
'Neath the grey crumbling walls of an ancient stronghold,
Its grim, frowning battlements grown green with age;
Where soft ivy clusters and nestling birds lie,
Once loud clanged the buckler and sword in their rage,
And the swift, hissing arrow through corselet would fly,
Now calm avocation the peasantry wage,
The grape and the olive, the clustering vine,
The young in the fields, 'neath their portals the aged,
Where blood streamed in torrent, now press the red wine.

Beneath the frowning battlement's gleams, white midst clustering vines,
In simple peasant habiliments, her soft, bright beauty shines;
Speeds to the rippling brooklet, where gushes forth the spring,
As falls her dainty footlet, the early dew still clings
To skin as soft as satin, an eye with diamond light,
A beauteous barefoot maiden with tresses dark as night;
As dove beneath the merlin, 'ere swoops the fiery hawk,
And all unconscious flutters, of danger recks she naught,
Two figures spring upon her from 'neath the rocky brink,
Where instant paused the maiden a moment 'ere she drink.

Mids't tangled vine and myrtle toss't,
Their feathery pinions screen from eye,
Siezed in their arms the maiden lost—
An instant's struggle, piercing cry,
A passing rustle, and no more,
The pool gleams vacant as before,
For the last time her features fair,
And soft, dark eye reflected there.
In vain her struggles up the height,
With strong, swift leaps their burden light,
From rock to rock, like chamois leap,
And fling before the bandit's feet
Their helpless captive fair,
Whose soft, dark eye shrinks neath the glare,
The baleful glow and lustful mien—

More pity in the lustrous sheen
Of his stiletto's glittering gleam—
She sinks in black despair.

Standing alone,
Obedient to the orders of his chief,
Amongst the woodland of the rockbound heights,
An outpost of the bandit's sentinels;
The traveller retinue he waits, comes not,
Silent the roadway bare.
He stands alert;
Deep seared by many a desperate deed,
Since fickle fortune's dire whirl
An outlaw flung him forth.
Benicia—memory of a happier day,
Recalled by the grim walls
Of yonder distant ruin;
There her sweet home.

But now to lie in wait like beast of prey,
Beneath the orders of his dreaded chief,
To sally forth, the struggling travellers slay,
To win their hard-earned gold, and find relief
From thought, and dark remorse, in nights of riot,
Deep carousal, sleep unquiet;
Stamped with the memory of the deeds of day.

No traveller's carriage comes, the hour grows late,
The outpost seeks the rendezvous where wait
The brigand band, when capture unachieved;
Breaks through the thicket, scarce his eye believed—
A girlish figure on the ground prostrate,
Gazing in wild despair—he comes too late.
With withering heart and pallid cheek,
His breath in gasps, he seeks to speak,
A deadly glitter in his eye,
An instant thought to sieze her, fly—
"Benicia!" would that she could die.
The inviolate laws to which they bend,

Were one once broken all would end.
The chief will first the prize demand,
And then abandoned to the band—
"Benicia!" kneels and grasps her hand.
"Away," the chieftain's stern command,
"Thou know'st our law, the girl unhand!"
And death to him who dares forsake,
An instant death who seeks to break
The law of the brigand.

Beneath the branches of a cypress tree
  Benicia bloodless lies,
Dishevelled, torn, with streaming hair,
  Gasping, convulsed, her eyes
Gleam with the fires of despair
  At thicket, forest, skies;
The copsewood shakes, the foliage breaks,
  Her lover to her flies,
One kiss upon her budding lips,
  One glance into her eyes,
Then the stiletto's glittering flash—
  Benicia gasps and dies.

FINIS.

TO A SOUTHERN BEAUTY.

Dans ma vie comme dans un desert
  Jai trouvé un petit courant d'eau,
Rafraichi comme un parfum en l'air
  Comme la neige avec fragrance de rose.

Gracieuse ravissante, inconnue,
  Tu mechappe comme une petite hirondelle,
Tu m'enflamme par tes yeux doux et bruns,
  Dans tes bras, je me trouverais au ciel!

Deux cœurs qui brulent d'une même flamme
  Ne se trompent pas de prendre le bonheur,
De passer un moment au ciel!
  Dans ta couche parfumée une brève heure.

N'attends pas le jour qui arrive;
  Le meilleur moment, c'est maintenant;
Pendant que l'amour vive nous suit,
Et la chance ne nous séparent pas:

L'amour qui arrive comme une fleur,
  Si douce, si brillante, si fragile,
Existe un bref jour, mais elle meurt
  Comme papillon gai dans le ciel.

A TALE OF VENICE.

Against sapphire skies in the fair port of Venice
  The tapering spars of the shipping are seen,
As a forest of spears to the clouds raised in menace
  From the sharp-prowed felucca, the raking lateen.
Midst the pulleys' dull creak and the sailors' deep cry,
  There stand the dark mariners, bronzed by the sun,
Whilst the anchor they weigh as the gondolas ply;
  From the Mediterranean or Orient come
The children of chance, who rely on the breeze,
  No danger doth daunt them, or peril retard,
The ocean their home, and its billowy seas
  More dear to the sailor than fairest greensward.
Soft glides a felucca, her ruddy sails gleaming,
  And smooth roll the seas in the hush of the morn,
With gentle breeze wafted, her light pennant streaming,
  Past quay, wall, and jetty in silence is borne.

From the thick crowded harbor she speeds to the ocean,
  From her dripping prow hisses the feathery foam,
As faster she flies in her swift gliding motion,
  Till on the horizon a dark speck alone,
Where gather the clouds as the coming storm hovers,
  O'er the Mediterranean its dark shadows fall,
And the lowering sky with a sombre hue covers
  The face of the sea as a funeral pall;
And deep sounds the wind in the far distance moaning,
  The storm clouds sweep down with a thunderous roar,
Till hurled in vast heights rise the black billows foaming,
  Their white, seething crests as an avalanche pour
O'er the plunging felucca, her spars dipped lies riding
  With bow to the seas, whilst her crew stand alert—
The young Duke from Venice they carry—now gliding
  To leeward, and drifting, their barque sweeps inert
Towards the seas breaking high, in the far distance hiding,
  In a mist of white waters, where hidden rocks lurk.

L. of C.

Leaps high in the shrieking whirlwind,
  Darts low as the swooping hawk,
Like a dove in the clutch of the merlin
  On the swirl of the sea she's caught;
The crests of the billows waver
  And break with a mighty roar,
And swift she drives to the leeward
  And strikes on the rockbound shore.
The sailors group on the taffrail,
  The helmsman clings to the wheel,
She heels in the deadly grapple
  Of the rocks, as they rip her keel;
With a roar like the sound of thunder
  Her bows 'neath the waves plunge deep,
As a rushing torrent under
  The seas o'er her hull now sweep,
Her spars crash over the quarter,
  She soars midst the billows' roar,
Then, deep in the foaming water, she sinks to be seen no more.
  Gone is the staunch felucca, glimmers the land in sight,
Deep in its purple shadow, high in its azure light,
  Struggles the young Duke bravely, struggles with youthful
    might,
Reaches the shore in safety ere the approach of night.

Worn with the warfare of the sea,
  Wrapped in his mantle, and with haggard eyes,
Approaching Venice ere the break of day,
  His course now towards the palace lies.
Beneath its parapets a gondola lay;
  A cloak-draped figure vanishing in night,
Swiftly receding, silent speeds away,
  An instant seen, to disappear from sight.
Now loom from the dark waters, near at hand,
  The massive steps of stone that pave the way,
The entrance to the Ducal Palace, on which stand,
  Awaiting his approach, an old steward grey;
The Duke alights, is followed by his steward,
  Who draws him back, and whispers low a word:

"My Duke, not I alone have served your house for many
years—
My fathers have from ancient time held true its trust;
To me the honor of its name is no less dear
Than are its fortunes, treasures; speak, I must—
My Duke, your absence serves those but too well,
Who, both to you and to your house, bode ill;
I whisper but a name,
Since by your unforeseen return the stain
May be erased
Ere fall irrevocable shame."
Arrests his course, turned on his servitor in stern regard,
Ponders in thought, replies but brief in word:
"Enough; thy zeal shall be requited; at fell cost,
My gondola, at midnight, at the hour
Thou sayest, will best prove the honor lost
Of an old name of Venice."
And turning on the threshold, as he came,
The Duke departs to await the moment named.

Darkness has fallen and the hour is late,
Dim glow the lights of Venice, closed the palace gate.
Wrapped in a cloak, and armed, a form alone,
Concealed, stands waiting in the shadow of the stone
Of bridge and turret of the palace wall.
Upon the silence of the night there falls
The sound of belfry tolling deep the passing hour,
And 'neath the dark night-clouds that lower
The faint plash of the gondolier,
Softly approaching, to appear
Below the balcony, where gleams a light,
A ray that strikes the water bright—
An instant seen, an instant to disclose
The silent figure of the Duke in dread repose;
Pausing a moment at the sight,
Swift turning in the water, vanishes in flight,
Like phantom shadow in the mists of night.
Now striding forth, his vigil at an end,
Towards the balcony his step doth trend,

Whilst from the casement, softly borne,
The distant murmur of a lover's song—
A voice he knows full well:

"Soft blows the sultry night-wind,
Dim gleams the waning moon,
Where foliage hangs in shadow
And sleeping flowers bloom.

"Where flows the silvery water,
And breaks the hush of night
With sound like rippling laughter,
And glow of soft delight.

"The nightingale is singing,
From clustering covert flown,
Thy arms around me clinging
Thy lips against my own,

"The spirit of Love's power,
The power of Love's might,
Was in that fatal hour,
That hour of delight.

"We recked not of the morrow,
Nor thought we of the past,
And lost in joy was sorrow
Whilst those brief moments last.

"But hearts that love must sever,
And ways must ever part,
To part perhaps forever,
Howe'er may ache the heart.

"The early light was dawning,
I bade my love farewell—
The glory of the morning
To us as funeral knell—

"Fled from the tangled bower,
And broke the subtle spell.
The dews of night in shower
From fragrant flowers fell

"As though to quell the power
Of hearts that loved too well."

Her voice sinks low, in silence dies away,
And quickening footsteps hasten toward the balcony,
Where stands the Duke.

In the dim folds of tapestry within the halls
Where burnished armor gleams from massive walls,
The dim light of the taper scarce revealing,
Amidst the shadow and the light concealing,
With parted lips, and fallen robes revealing
The dazzling beauty of a form of snow,
Her glistening eyes with passion's fire glow
And gaze toward the bosom of the sea,
Calm and majestic in its mystery;
Clouded in darkness, from which springs
The gondola's dim form, as rings
The tread of heavy footsteps on the stone,
To the low balcony there leaps, alone,
Not her expectant lover, but her doom—
With hissing breath and dire purpose come—
Flings on the ground his mantle, wheels around,
Lets fall the lattice, with a bound
Crushes her shrinking figure to the ground.
"And thus thou hast deceived me!
Thus, in many an hour!
Lulled by the subtlety of beauty's blinding power
I dreamed, and I believed thee;
Look on these walls, and mark them well,
On the last sight thine eyes shall dwell;
Then take my vengence, and my curse—farewell!"
The rapier flashes from its sheath, an instant glitters 'fore her
eyes,

Pierces her heart; as her last breath,
Her dying shriek, cleaves the night skies
The crimson blood her snowy bosom dyes;
Through the canal, towards the sea, the gondola flies.

L'ENVOI.

Fortune, her favors deals with fickle hand;
The peasant, in his lot of toil,
His rugged strength, the fertile soil
Supplies his wants. At his command
The simpler joys that happiness bring;
To loftier aims must greater evils cling—
With place and power, carking care;
Ambition, strife and intrigue mar;
The supple courtier, flattering, false doth bend;
On wealth, envy, and disillusion tend;
And beauty, with its powers of joy,
Deceit and jealousy its powers alloy.

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